

Iraqis and to help the Iraqis kill terrorists and defend their sovereignty. Our presence in Iraq also helps our operations in Syria against ISIS and al-Qaida.

Again, it is pretty obvious the terrorist threat is not over. Remember, the disastrous withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan may not simply be felt in that country; a Taliban victory and resurgence of al-Qaida could embolden jihadists all over the world, just as the rise of ISIS did in the wake of President Obama's withdrawal from Iraq.

As we watch Afghanistan descend into chaos and ISIS continue to lash out in Iraq and Syria, now is not the time for either the United States or Iraq to pretend that our shared mission is over. As I have warned again and again, terrorists don't observe our political timetables. They don't pack up just because we lose faith or lose focus.

So let's hope this administration is already learning from their mistakes in Afghanistan. When the Iraqi Prime Minister visits next week, the White House should provide strong assurances that the United States will stand strong with our friends and continue to support our partners who are standing up to terror and to extremism.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The majority whip.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, America is a nation of immigrants. But for the Native Americans, the first people over here, all of us have come to this country in various stages in our family life: personally, through our parents, grandparents, and beyond. We have built, within the confines of our Nation, an amazing story to tell the world of how such a diverse group of people can come together in one place and make a nation that has an impact on the world itself. That makes it very difficult to understand sometimes why we struggle so much with the issue of immigration. It is so central to who we are, what we have done, what we will become. Yet, when the conversation comes around about immigration policy, immigration law, we dissemble into warring factions and too often get little or nothing done.

The Presiding Officer may be surprised to know that it has been almost 36 years—36 years—since this Congress has passed any meaningful or substantive immigration law. The last real effort was under President Ronald Reagan. That is not an indication that our immigration system is perfect. It is far from perfect. There are many problems with it, as we look at it in a critical and important way.

I look at it from a perspective that maybe is different than some. I am the son of an immigrant. My mother was brought to this country at the age of 2 from Lithuania, became a naturalized citizen, and was very proud of that fact and raised her three boys to be proud of it as well.

Just a few steps from this Chamber is my office that I have decorated with the naturalization certificate of my mother right next to my desk, a reminder of who I am, where I came from, and also a warning to anyone coming into the office that this Senator feels very strongly about the issues of immigration.

Now I have the responsibility, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to actually deal with the laws surrounding immigration. It is not an easy assignment. If we have failed for 36 years to come up with a law, it is because there are strongly held views on both sides. Yesterday was a good illustration of that.

I called for a hearing with my friend and colleague Senator ALEX PADILLA, a California Senator, on farm labor, farm workers. The reason we wanted to call this was because it was not untimely that we had received a bill from the House of Representatives, which they passed on a bipartisan basis, to rewrite the laws on farm workers. They did a great job. I want to commend them for the effort of sending this legislation our way, this bipartisan legislation with 30 Republicans joining most of the House Democrats to enact it in the House of Representatives. And now it is over on our side of the Rotunda. It is a timely and important question.

We estimate that there are 2.4 million farmworkers in the United States who plant and pick our crops, milk the cows, process the food, and work in poultry and meat processing. And without them, these industries would struggle to survive.

That is not my analysis; it is the analysis of the American Farm Bureau and many other organizations that represent agriculture in America.

Of the 2.4 million farmworkers in the United States who pick these crops, half of them are undocumented. That means that, literally, they work in the fields picking the crops that reach our tables and they could be deported at any minute.

The bill that came over from the House of Representatives addresses that. Here is what it says. It says: If you can prove that you have worked picking crops for at least 10 years—10 years—and you can pass a criminal background check, we will give you the opportunity to apply for citizenship. But it is not instantaneous. Ten years is just the starting point. You then have to give us 4 years more of working in the fields, and then we will give you a green card. And in 5 years more, you could be eligible for citizenship. You are going to go through all kinds of reviews and background checks on your path to that moment.

So literally, we are saying to farm workers: If you will give us 19 years of your life picking our crops, we will give you a chance to be a citizen.

I have just heard that process characterized as amnesty—amnesty. For people who are breaking their backs, in the sweltering heat of America, with the toughest jobs imaginable, spending 19 years of their life putting food on our table and then passing a criminal background check, some call amnesty. I won't.

And if you had listened yesterday to the hearing, you would understand why even that process, as bipartisan as it was in the House, is in a tangle of politics here on the Senate side. Two speeches given by members of the Republican membership of the committee really told the story. They started talking not about farm workers picking crops or milking cows or processing our food, they started talking about terrorists, drug dealers, human traffickers, violent criminals coming across our border.

And they rejected the notion that we should give any of them the opportunity for citizenship at any point. They didn't even read the bill. About 19 years of hard work in the field before you could possibly qualify, they just said "reject it."

And when I listened to that, I wondered what they had for dinner last night because it is quite likely that whatever they had—whether it was a vegan diet or one that included meat or other food products—it was on their plate because one of these people that they have just characterized as a potential terrorist is breaking his back, day in and day out, to make sure that there is food for every American.

We heard stories. Linnea Kooistra was a dairy farmer in Woodstock, IL. She and her husband own a dairy farm. That may be one of the hardest assignments in the world. Those cows are going to get milked twice a day if you are going to make a living, and you better be prepared to give time to do it every single day, twice a day. She and her husband did it for years, won awards for their work.

Now, they have just kind of semiretired into row crops, which are challenging, too, but not like a dairy farm. And she said: You know, the thought of our continuing our farm was impossible unless we had immigrant labor.

The jobs on their dairy farm are tough, demanding jobs. People aren't lining up to apply for those jobs. They needed immigrants to make it work, and they couldn't get them.

There was a fellow that was there yesterday—an extraordinary guy, person; I had just met him for the first time—and I ran across him by watching television. I said, yesterday in a hearing, that my appetite for television starts with the Chicago Bears and goes through baseball, a lot of politics and news, but I never miss, if I can help it, the CBS "Sunday Morning" show.